(a) whether the agriculture experts have asked the Government to enhance the investments in infrastructure for the agriculture sector;

(b) if so, the total investments in infrastructure for agricultural sector made by the Government during the last three years and the result achieved thereby; and

(c) the time by which the investment in infrastructure is likely to be enhanced ?

THE MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE (EXCLUDING THE DEPARTMENT OF ANIMAL HUSBANDRY AND DAIRYING) (SHRI CHATURANAN MISHRA) : (a) No, Sir. However, the Government assigns a very high priority to investment in the development of infrastructure in the agriculture sector.

(b) As per the estimates made by the Central Statistical Organisation, the figures of gross capital formation (which includes fixed assets such as irrigation, buildings, roads, bridges and other construction works, machinery and equipments) in the Public Sector as also the total during the last three years i.e. from 1993-94 to 1995-96 at current and at 1980-81 prices are given below:

(Rs. in crores)

Year	Total		Public Sector	
	At current prices	At 1980-81 prices	At current prices	At 1980-81 prices
1993-94	17009	5038	4467	1153
1994-95	20737	5678	5620	1329
1995-96*	24937	6301	6274	1310

*Quick estimates Source : C.S.O.

(c) The thrust of the Public Sector Investment is on optimising investment already made. The strategy to increase capital formation in agriculture includes increase plan outlay and increasing the proportion for development of infrastructure, more efficient use of resources to rise productivity and ensuring remunerative prices to farmers to enable them to use savings for higher investment. A new Rural Infrastructure Development Fund within NABARD has been established to provide credit for medium and minor irrigation and soil conservation projects. A Scheme of Accelerated Irrigation Benefit Programme (AIBP) is also initiated for providing assistance to States by way of loans for timely completion of selected large and multi purpose irrigation projects.

Support Prices of Pepper, Cashewnut, etc.

1667. SHRI N.K. PREMCHANDRAN : Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state :

(a) whether the Government are considering to bring some other commodities like pepper, cashewnut, rubber, cardamom, etc. under the support price programme;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) if not, the reasons therefor;

(d) whether the Government also propose to bring the said commodities under the purview of Commission for Agricultural Cost and Prices; and

(e) the preventive measures proposed to be taken by the Government to check the fluctuation of the prices of the said commodities ?

THE MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE (EXCLUDING THE DEPARTMENT OF ANIMAL HUSBANDRY AND DAIRYING) (SHRI CHATURANAN MISHRA) : (a) to (c) The Government is fixing the Minimum Support Prices (MSP) of all major agricultural commodities. The other commodities, mainly horticultural and spices crops, including pepper, cashew and cardamom, are covered under the Market Intervention Scheme (MIS) to protect the interest of farmers from making distress sale of their produce. The MIS is undertaken on year to year basis at the specific request of a particular State Government as and when it is apprehended that price of a commodity may fall to uneconomic levels for the farmers during peak arrival period. A pre-determined quantity at a price fixed by the Central Government, in consultation with the concerned State Government, are procured by NAFED as central nodal agency and the agencies nominated by State Government on equal basis. The losses, if any, under the scheme are shared by the Central and State Government on 50:50 basis. As no proposal has been received from any State Government in this regard, no MIS is being implemented in above mentioned crops at present.

(d) At present, there is no proposal to bring the said commodities under the purview of MSP recommended by the Commission for Agricultural Costs and Prices.

(e) Any undue fall in the prices of various fruits, vegetables and spices is sought to be prevented through judicious implementation of MIS in appropriate cases. Prices of these commodities are also sought to be regulated through appropriate trade policies as also through various developmental measures for increasing their domestic production.

National Dairy Development Board

1668. SHRI HARIN PATHAK : Will the Minister of ANIMAL HUSBANDRY AND DAIRYING be pleased to state:

(a) whether the National Dairy Development Board has been receiving grants in the form of milk products from the European Community Countries and other developed countries for the past several years;

(b) if so, the date on which this scheme was introduced and the assistance received till date, year-wise;